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STAFF-LINE CONCEPT: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance,
a thesis entitled Staff-Line Concept: A Review of the
Literature submitted by Douglas M. Pearce in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Business Administration.

ABSTRACT

Numerous writers have discussed various aspects of the staff-line concept and its implications on organizations from a structural and behavioral point of view. This study attempts to consolidate many of the ideas behind these writings and place them in chronological order.

A review of the literature on the formation and evolution of the staff-line concept is presented to build a foundation from which staff-line issues can be examined. In general, this review indicates that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the staff-line type of organization. Essentially, several writers observed that this type of organizational structure does not define the actual relationships between the different organizational people and as a result, conflict ensues.

For purposes of examining the above observation, this study introduces the concept of work orientation as an approach to viewing the relationships between different types of organizational people in isolation of the traditional staff and line type of organization. The study then turns to an analysis of the actual conflict between staff and line and attempts to relate it to their different work orientations.



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This study proposes to examine the literature on the staff-line concept with the aim of achieving the following objectives:

1. To present a relatively complete review of the literature on the evolution of the staff-line concept;
2. To examine the important issues that underlie the staff-line concept;
3. To introduce the concept of work orientation and demonstrate its usefulness in evaluating the effectiveness of the staff-line concept in contemporary industry.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study is essentially aimed at consolidating the literature related to the staff-line relationship. It has,

however, attempted to incorporate the concept of work orientation as a new approach to viewing the relationship between staff and line people. On the basis of this new approach, several conclusions were drawn as to the feasibility of the staff-line concept in contemporary organizations. These conclusions were approached through a series of logical assumptions and therefore need to be subjected to empirical research for final validation.

Overview of the Topic Area

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, writers began to recognize management as a distinct function for which scientific principles could be applied. With the advent of Frederick Taylor's principles of specialization and the separation of planning from performance, writers began to show concern over the traditional military type of organization that prevailed at this time. They observed that this type of organization was unable to accommodate problems created with the increasing size and complexities of organizations.

In response to the shortcomings of the military organization, Taylor formulated a totally new concept of

organizational relationships, referred to as the functional organization. It was short lived, but was recognized as the first formal attempt at incorporating the specialist into the organizational structure.

Reflecting Taylor's ideas of incorporating specialization and division of labour into the organizational structure, the staff-line concept was conceived. Essentially, this type of organization maintains that the line has complete responsibility for all primary functions, while the staff group are assigned an auxiliary responsibility of assisting the line group. This arrangement was fairly successful in the earlier part of the twentieth century as it did remove much of the administrative responsibilities from the line managers. However, as organizations grew in size and complexity and the staff group began to play increasingly important roles, problems of distinguishing between the two groups arose. In fact, in actual organizational functioning, many staff were evolving from a position having no authority to one with authority. To accommodate such a transition, many writers actually attempted to re-define the staff-line relationship in terms of an authority continuum.

With mounting criticisms of the staff-line concept's inability to describe the actual relationship between the two groups, some authors attempted to look at interpersonal problems from the point of view of work orientation. In this regard, several writers observed that organizational people could be identified as being procedurally oriented, service oriented, or somewhere between these two extremes. Further, they observed that when oppositely oriented individuals interact, conflict develops. Since the staff people frequently are associated with a service orientation and line people with a procedural orientation, it is feasible to propose that much of the staff-line conflict should be a result of their different work orientations.

In an examination of the literature on staff-line conflict as reflected in such variables as social background differences, technology and authority relationships, it is realized that many of the staff-line problems are not directly related to their different work orientations. Thus, important questions arise which may reflect on the validity or feasibility of using the staff-line concept in contemporary organizations. In particular; does the use of the staff-line relationship intensify

or reduce the basic conflict between the service and procedural oriented people ?

Organization of the Study

This chapter has defined the purpose of the study, indicated its scope and limitations, and presented a general overview of the topic area. Chapter II will present a historical perspective of the thinking that led to the concept of staff and line. Chapter III will define the traditional staff-line concept and explore the issues of contention which caused many writers to attempt to re-define this concept.

In response to the many criticisms of the staff-line concept, Chapter IV, utilizing the concept of work orientation, will attempt to set up a theoretical base from which an objective evaluation can be made of the staff-line concept in contemporary organizations. In this regard, a basic conflict situation will be revealed between the service oriented specialist and the procedurally oriented line. Finally, Chapter V will review the conflict between staff and line as cited in the literature and attempt to reconcile this conflict with the basic conflict situation mentioned in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

Prior to the twentieth century, management was not considered a distinct function. Human inter-relations were viewed passively and values and institutional arrangements of the past were accepted as valid.¹ It was not until the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century that attitudes on management changed. A mental revolution took place at this time which was often referred to as the "Scientific Management Movement." With the aid of Frederick Taylor's Principles of Scientific Management, writers began to appreciate that human interrelations could

¹Claude S. George, The History of Management Thought (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 87, 90; L. Urwick, The Golden Book of Management (London: The Millbrook Press Limited, 1956); John H. Hoagland, "Management Before Frederick Taylor," in Current Issues and Emerging Concepts in Management, ed. by Paul M. Dauten, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), pp. 19-30; Charles Babbage, The Exposition of 1851; or Views of the Industry, the Science, and the Government of England (London: John Murray, 1851).

be viewed scientifically and objectively.² Thus, history witnessed the rise of management as a distinct function.

With the introduction of science to business management and the rapid growth in the size of organizations, limitations of the early military type of organization became of paramount importance.³ Problems of delegation and span of control became apparent in larger, more progressive organizations. The increased size and complexity of these organizations caused a rapid increase in the administrative responsibilities of the top executives such that it became

²Raymond Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), pp. 12-26; G. D. Babcock, Taylor's Systems in Franklin Management (New York: Engineering Magazine Co., 1917); H. Diemer, "A Bibliography of Works of Management," Engineering Magazine (July, 1904), p. 626; H. B. Drury, Scientific Management--A History and Criticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), pp. 248-250; Dwight Waldo, The Administrative State (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), pp. 47-50.

³Alvin Brown, The Organization of Industry (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), Ch. 2, 5; William R. Spriegel and Richard H. Lansburgh, Industrial Management (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1947), p. 66; D. S. Kimball and D. S. Kimball, Jr., Principles of Industrial Organization (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1947), p. 161; Ralph Currier Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), pp. 365-68.

difficult for them to function effectively.⁴ When the executives attempted to remove some of the administrative burden by delegation, they ran into problems of too great a span of control.⁵ Further, with only one direct chain of communication in this type of organization, problems of speed of action, flexibility and hierarchial distance prevailed.⁶ Since this type of organization can only grow by devolution of the primary chain, organizational distance increased between top management and the operational level causing a slow down in communication as well as distortions in

⁴Ernest Dale, Organization (New York: American Management Association, 1967), pp. 189-190; Brown, The Organization of Industry, Ch. 2, 3; R. S. Edwards and H. Townsend, Business Enterprise: Its Growth and Organization (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1958), pp. 32-59.

⁵Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure (New York: American Management Association, 1952), pp. 70-72; L. Urwick, "Executive Decentralization with Functional Co-ordination," The Management Review (December, 1935), pp. 356-359; R. E. Gillmor, A Practical Manual of Organization (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1948), p. 12.

⁶Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, pp. 200-201; Justin G. Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1964), p. 169.

messages. Finally, problems of specialization hampered the effectiveness of this type of organization. The increased size and complexity of companies demanded services of specialized and technically trained people. Since the military organization is not structured to accommodate the specialist, organizations under this type of structure found difficulties in remaining competitive.⁷

Concerned with scientific management and fully aware of the problems and limitations of the military type of organization, Frederick Taylor formulated a completely new type of organization in which he engaged the use of the concept of functional foremen.⁸ This organization was unique

⁷Harrington Emerson, Twelve Principles of Efficiency (New York: Engineering Magazine Co., 1912), p. 49; Melville Dalton, Men Who Manage: Fusion of Feeling and Theory in Administration (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1959), p. 14; Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 366; Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, p. 83.

⁸Frederick Winslow Taylor, Shop Management (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1919), p. 99; Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Scientific Management (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947).

in the sense that it was divided by functions rather than authority as was done in the military type of organization.

In Taylor's functional organization, he separated planning from performance and has been credited for starting a trend toward a recognition of specialists. The separation of planning from performance had some obvious advantages over the military type of organization. It facilitated specialization and created an environment in which the specialist could develop. Further, it reduced the number of functions each man was called upon to perform and thereby eliminated many of the administrative responsibilities of the top executives.⁹ There were, however, several limitations to this type of organization that forced Taylor to abandon it after several unsuccessful pilot tests. Essentially, co-ordination up the line broke down because of overlapping

⁹L. Urwick, "Organization as a Technical Problem," in Papers on the Science of Administration, ed. by Luther Gulick and L. Urwick (New York: Institute of Public Administration, 1937), p. 52; William Foote Whyte, Men At Work (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1961), p. 93; Lawrence L. Bethel, et al. Industrial Organization and Management (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1945), p. 138; Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management.

authority and the inability to fix responsibilities.¹⁰ The experiment was not a complete failure, however, as it did set the trend toward recognition of the specialist. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to examine in more detail the issues reflected in the scientific management movement and thereby reveal some of the thinking that caused management to discard the old military type of organization for something that would incorporate the principle of specialization.

Scientific Management

Prior to the twentieth century business management was rarely considered a discrete and identifiable activity.

¹⁰Stanley Vance, Industrial Administration (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), p. 126; Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 15; F. D. Barrett, "The Staff-line Dilemma," Executive, (June, 1964), p. 46; Willard N. Hogan, "A Dangerous Tendency in Government," Public Administration Review, 4 (Summer, 1946), p. 235; Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

Claude S. George pointed out some of the shortcomings of the management system at this time. He noted, for example: (1) management had no clear concept of worker-management responsibilities; (2) no effective work standards were applied; (3) no incentive was used to improve labor's performance; (4) systematic soldiering existed on every hand; (5) managerial decisions were based on hunch, intuition, past experience, or rule-of-thumb evaluations; (6) no research was done; (7) workers were not placed in the work process by ability or aptitude.¹¹

It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that industry began to witness the emerging thoughts on management as a distinct function that required the use

¹¹George, The History of Management Thought, p. 87. For a further consideration of the status of business management prior to the general acceptance of scientific management, see L. Urwick, The Golden Book of Management; Raymond Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, pp. 12-26; John H. Hagland, "Management Before Frederick Taylor," pp. 19-30.

of scientific methods.¹² The application of science to management, which has been labelled the Scientific Management Movement, bridged the gap between science and the practice of industrial management.¹³ This movement originated at the May, 1886 historical meeting of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in which Frederick W. Taylor actively participated.¹⁴ From this date forward, Taylor devoted himself to elevating man's economic life by increasing industrial output with the assistance of

¹²Charles Babbage, The Exposition of 1851. Babbage was probably the first writer to realize the inefficiency existing in industrial management and that scientific methods could be applied. For a more complete bibliography of his ideas see John Hardie Hoagland, Charles Babbage--His Life and Works in the Historical Evolutions of Management Concepts (Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1954), pp. 396-416.

¹³Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 14. Villers produced a graphic illustration of this union.

¹⁴American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Transactions, 7 (1886), pp. 469-474. G. D. Babcock, Taylor Systems in Franklin Management; H. Diemer, "A Bibliography of Works of Management," p. 626; E. E. Hunt, Scientific Management Since Taylor (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1924), p. 14; J. H. Patterson, "Altruism and Sympathy as Factors in Works Administration," Engineering Magazine, (January, 1901), p. 577; W. H. Wakeman, "The Management of Men in Mills and Factories," Engineering Magazine (October, 1894), p. 48.

scientific methods.¹⁵ In 1911, Taylor published his book, The Principles of Scientific Management, which organized his thoughts on the formulation of a Science of Industrial Management. For his organization of the principles of scientific management, which constitute the backbone of sound industrial management, he received world wide acclaim.¹⁶ In particular, Waldo credited Taylor for beginning a "mental revolution" in the sense that human inter relations could be viewed scientifically and objectively rather than passively accepting the values and institutional arrange-

¹⁵Dwight Waldo, The Administrative State, p. 47.

¹⁶For an insight into what constitutes Taylor's greatness, see H. B. Drury, Scientific Management--A History and Criticism, pp. 248-250; G. Filepetti, Industrial Management in Transition (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1953), p. 17; R. F. Hoxie, Scientific Management and Labour (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1916), pp. 8-11, 15-19, 140-149, and 169-177; H. S. Person, "The Genius of F. W. Taylor," Advanced Management, (January, 1945). A discussion summarizing Taylor's major principles of scientific management can be found in George, The History of Management Thought, p. 90; Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 29. Also see, C. T. Mackenize, "The Saga of Work and Management," Noma Forum, (July, 1949), pp. 5-9.

ments practiced in the earlier part of the nineteenth century.¹⁷

Taylor's realization of the need to apply scientific principles in industrial management to facilitate efficiency and hence a better economic life for all concerned, directed his attention toward considerations of specialization and the separation of planning and performance.¹⁸ He found that by placing a worker in an area in which he was skilled and by having an equally skilled man supervising the worker, he was able to insure excellence of operation. To accommo-

¹⁷Waldo, The Administrative State, p. 50. See also, Urwick, The Golden Book of Management, p. 73; George, The History of Management Thought, p. 90. George claimed that Taylor called for a mental revolution on the part of both labor and management so that they might understand these principles and co-operate in a spirit of work harmony in order to improve their respective lots--attaining higher wages for labor and increased output at lower costs for management.

¹⁸George, The History of Management Thought, p. 90; Frederick Winslow Taylor, Shop Management (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1919). Taylor expressed his ideas on increased specialization when he said: "Functional management consists in so dividing the work of management that each man from the assistant superintendent down shall have as few functions as possible to perform." p. 99. He expressed his ideas on separation of planning and performance when he said: "All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or layout department, leaving for the foremen and gang bosses work strictly executive in its nature." pp. 98-99.

date this new approach to industrial operations he developed a concept of functional foremen.¹⁹

This concept was an unsuccessful attempt at organizing a structure that would accommodate specialization by dividing the total organization into several specialized functions, each with its own boss.²⁰ Taylor's work did, however, set the seed for a new type of organizational design.²¹ Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell supported this idea when they said: "The separation of planning and performance, recommended by Frederick Taylor and his disciples, gave impetus to staff organization..."²²

¹⁹George, The History of Management Thought, p. 90. L. Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 51. Urwick noted that Taylor's concept of functional foremen demonstrated the first formal recognition of the consequences of specialization on the old idea of military, scalar or line organization.

²⁰Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 32. Villers acknowledged that this approach to management was not even entirely accepted at Midvale, the machine shop that Taylor set up his ideas on functional foremen. See also, H. B. Drury, Scientific Management, p. 204.

²¹Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 32.

²²Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, Principles of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 270.

Notwithstanding Taylor's contribution to the formation of this staff-line type of organization, one must appreciate that it evolved from an earlier type of organization that has been called among other names, the Military, Scalar, or Line organization.

Military, Scalar or Line Organization

When modern industry first developed, it was directly inspired and shaped by the military organizational pattern.²³ This type of organization contained a chain of authority through which the supreme co-ordinating authority became effective throughout the entire structure.²⁴ Ralph

²³ For an elaborate view of the military patterning of organization, see Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960). See also, Kurt Lang, "Military Organizations," in Handbook of Organizations, ed. by James E. March (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1965), pp. 838-878.

²⁴ James D. Mooney, The Principles of Organization (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947), pp. 14-15; Richard H. Lansburgh, Industrial Management (2nd ed.; New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1928), p. 46; Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 77; Lawrence L. Bethel, et al., Industrial Organization and Management, p. 136. For a further discussion on the importance of having a chain of command, see James D. Mooney and Alan C. Reiley, Onward Industry (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 19; L. Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 51.

Currier Davis makes this more specific when he acknowledged that the line organization structure had simple, direct lines of responsibility, authority, and accountability between top leadership and the lowest echelon.²⁵ D. S. Kimball and D. S. Kimball, Jr. contributed to this description when they pointed out that all men on the same authority level are independent of all other similarly situated.²⁶

The straight-line type of organization has certain advantages in small organizations.²⁷ Its simple, direct lines of responsibility are easy to understand; it is conducive to the employees developing a feeling of participation, of belonging or of worth-whileness; and

²⁵Ralph Currier Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 363.. See also, Melville Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 14.

²⁶D. S. Kimball and D. S. Kimball, Jr., Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 161.

²⁷Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, pp. 364-365; Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 66. See also, Spriegel and E. C. Davis, Principles of Business Organization (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946).

finally it is capable of developing well-rounded executives.²⁸

This type of organization was quite satisfactory in the early days of industrial management. It was not until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that business management began to detect problems with this type of organization.²⁹

The increased size and complexity of organizations stimulated the design of a scientific management approach. With the introduction of science to business

²⁸Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 66. They explained that this type of organization is easy to understand because under the scalar command, members have only one boss and hence, they know to whom they are accountable. A further explanation of these advantages can be found in Davis, Fundamentals of Top Management, pp. 364-365. He said: "There is usually less specialization among executive and operative personnel. They can be assigned promptly when and where needed. There is usually greater use of general-purpose facilities. A highly centralized line control may be an advantage for the small concern. It may make possible close, personal executive co-ordination. Action tends to be prompt and decisive, because of short, simple, direct channels of communication and chains of command."

²⁹It was about the same time that people such as Charles Babbage, Henry Metcalfe, F. W. Taylor began to formulate the idea of introducing science to business management. For information on some of these writers, see Hoagland, Charles Babbage, pp. 396-416; Henry Metcalfe, Scientific Foundations of Business Administration (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Co., 1926); L. Urwick, The Golden Book of Management.

management the need to incorporate specialization into organizational theory was realized. It was at this point in the evolution of organization theory that numerous writers realized that there were grave limitations to the pure scalar or military type of organization.³⁰

One important disadvantage of the straight-line type of organization under pressure of rapid growth is that the top executives become over burdened with an excessive load of administrative responsibilities.³¹ Unless the top executive removes the excessive burden of administration, he will "bottle-neck" the organization. Furthermore, if he delegates excessively, a hierarchy of little "caesars"

³⁰Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, pp. 365-368; Alvin Brown, The Organization of Industry, Ch. 2, 5; Harrington Emerson, Twelve Principles of Efficiency; Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 161; Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 66.

³¹Ernest Dale, Organization, pp. 189-190. For a discussion on the concept of a residual administrative responsibility see, Brown, The Organization of Industry, Ch. 2, 5. For an elaborate discussion on the types of organizational growth, see R. S. Edwards and H. Townsend, Business Enterprise: Its Growth and Organization, pp. 32-59; Ernest Dale, Readings in Management: Landmarks and New Frontiers (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), pp. 238-245.

may develop which could have an undesirable effect on employee morale.³² Both directions will create problems within the organization. In essence, the problem is one of determining the span of control. Dale stated the issue quite succinctly when he said: "The optimum span of control may be determined by weighing the advantages of retaining managerial responsibility as against the gains to be realized by delegating it." ³³

³²Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 366.

³³Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, p. 72. Dale defines the optimum span of control as: "...the number of subordinates who can be effectively supervised by one man is generally set between three and six." p. 69. For example, see L. Urwick, "Executive Decentralization with Functional Co-ordination," p. 356, 359; Sir Ian Hamilton, The Soul and Body of an Army (London: Arnold, 1921), p. 229; R. E. Gillmor, A Practical Manual of Organization, p. 12. There is evidence in the literature that span of control should be continually increased. For example, see James C. Worthy, "Organizational Structure and Employee Morale," American Sociological Review (April, 1950), p. 178; F. L. W. Richardson, Jr. and Charles R. Walker, Human Relations in an Expanding Company (New Haven, Connecticut: Labour and Management Center, Yale University, 1948), p. 49. For a general discussion on the reasons for and against a limited span of control, see Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, pp. 70-72.

Another basic disadvantage of the simple line organization is its inability to facilitate specialization.

The problems arising with increased company size require the services of specialized, technically trained personnel.³⁴

Davis stated that the lack of managerial specialization with the straight-line type of organization could cause serious loss of competitive effectiveness in large concerns.³⁵

Spriegel and Lansburgh noted that a large organization under the straight-line organization would require a high type of supervisory personnel to carry the burdens imposed by increasing responsibilities.³⁶ These burdens are

³⁴Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, p. 83; Emerson, Twelve Principles of Efficiency, p. 49; Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 66; Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 14; Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 360.

³⁵Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 366. He bases his logic on the realization that the vision of top executives becomes fogged by a haze of administrative details. Furthermore, the movement of scientific management brought with it the idea that the introduction of specialization into organizations was the most efficient approach to operating a large industry. See Taylor, The Principles of Scientific Management (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1914).

³⁶Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 66.

appreciated when one considers that the requirements of the top executives, such as; all-round ability, background, training, and experience rapidly increase with line growth.³⁷ Harrington Emerson carried this difficulty to its extreme when he said: "In vain does the president or vice-president, manager or superintendent issue orders and delegate power under current (line) organization. Knowledge and ability, desire and interest, becomes diluted with every spreading step."³⁸

Several other weaknesses of straight-line as the primary type of organization can be readily identified.³⁹ The promotions of second and third line executives is limited because there are no specialists that can scientifically and objectively select the best man and hence, nepotism may develop.⁴⁰ The existence of only one direct chain of

³⁷Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 366.

³⁸Emerson, Twelve Principles of Efficiency, p. 49.

³⁹Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, pp. 367-368.

⁴⁰For a discussion of how the top management can find itself in the dark regarding managerial talent below the level of his immediate supervisors, see Justin G. Longnecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior, p. 170; Guy Hunter, Studies in Management (London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1961), pp. 31-32.

can hamper speed of action and flexibility. Since the organization can only grow by devolution of this primary chain, the organizational distance between top authority and operative action rapidly increases causing a slow down in communications as well as introducing inaccuracies and distortions in the messages.⁴¹

Finally, a highly centralized line control will tend to delegate functions and responsibilities. Problems are created when corresponding authority is not delegated.⁴² This type of delegation may not materially diminish the load of the higher executive as he maintains the authority for a final decision. It can, however, damage the morale of the minor executives as they are forced into a subordinate

⁴¹The more levels of management a message travels through, the longer it will take and hence, greater is the chance of error. For a further discussion on this aspect of the chain of command, see Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, pp. 200-201; Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organization Behavior, p. 169.

⁴²The existence of a great deal of delegation in a straight-line organization is exemplified in Emerson, Twelve Principles of Efficiency, p. 44. Davis, Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 367. Davis calls the unequal delegation of responsibilities and authority "...a violation of the Principle of Coincidence of Responsibility and Authority."

leadership role.⁴³

In general , the inadequacy of the straight-line type of organizations under pressures of increased size, complexity, and use of specialization was recognized by the early writers on scientific management. They realized that the incorporation of specialized personnel into management would require an organization structure different from that of the straight-line organization.⁴⁴ Specifically, Taylor introduced his concept of functional foremen.⁴⁵

⁴³George Filipetti, "Line Organization," A. M. A. Management Review, (April, 1932). Filipetti noted that to avoid this problem the top executive could transfer the problem to a lower level by delegating responsibilities and corresponding authority.

⁴⁴Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 18. Villers noted that as early as 1832, Charles Babbage attempted to define a new organizational pattern which he called "judicious distribution of duties." For original source, see Charles Babbage, On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures (London, 1932), p. 202. Henry Metcalfe was another early writer who suggested a different type of organization in his paper, "The Shop Order System of Accounts" which he presented before the A. S. M. E. in 1886. His plans of organization were based on the division of work between the work shop and the office (planning and performance) and can be found in A. S. M. E. Transactions, Vol. 7, 1886.

⁴⁵Taylor, Shop Management, p. 99.

Functional Organization

In the year 1911, Taylor formally conceptualized four basic principles of management which constituted scientific management.⁴⁶ For practical application of these principles of management the former straight-line type of organization had to be discarded.⁴⁷ Taylor suggested a new type of organization that was unique in the sense that it was divided by functions rather than by

⁴⁶Taylor, Principles of Scientific Management, pp. 36-37. Taylor's four principles are as follows: (1) Develop a science for each element of a man's work, which replaces the old rule-of-thumb method. (2) Scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past he chose his own work and trained himself as best he could. (3) Heartily co-operate with the men so as to insure all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science which has been developed. (4) There is an almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and the workmen. The management should take over all work for which they are best equipped, while in the past almost all of the work and the greater part of the responsibility was thrown upon the workers. See also, Herbert G. Hicks, The Management of Organizations (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 329.

⁴⁷Taylor, Shop Management, p. 99. For a collection of Taylor's writings, see Frederick Winslow Taylor, Scientific Management.

authority as was done in the earlier straight-line organization.⁴⁸

Further, this type of organization was unique in the sense that it separated planning from performance.⁴⁹

In effect, Taylor saw the total organization as a hierarchy composed of eight or more distinct streams or lines of functional authority. These lines extended from the top to the lowest level, the worker.⁵⁰ Four of these lines were in charge of operations within the machine shop and the other four were responsible for planning.

In the machine shop, the four executive functional foremen were to assist the men individually in their own specialized areas. These specialized or functional areas

⁴⁸Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 165. Taylor's functional management approach suggested that there should be eight different bosses in his metal-working plant, each of whom performs his own particular function. Taylor, Shop Management, pp. 99-102.

⁴⁹George, The History of Management Thought, p. 90. George observed that under straight-line organization the burden of methods as well as operations was on labour. Taylor's functional organizational approach would take the load of planning, organizing, controlling, methods determination, etc. off the back of labour and give it to specialists who were equipped to handle it more effectively.

⁵⁰Taylor, Shop Management, p. 110.

were as follows: the gang boss (who was responsible for the preparation of work up to the time that the piece was set in the machine), the speed boss (whose responsibility began when the piece was in the machine and ended when the machine stopped), the inspector (who was responsible for the quality of the work), and the repair boss (who was responsible for the maintenance).⁵¹ In the planning department, the four specialists were the order of work and route clerk, the instruction card clerk, the time and cost clerk, and the shop disciplinarian.⁵²

Taylor's conception of functional foremen in a larger shop required that each of the bosses who was performing the same function should have their own foremen over them. For instance, the gang bosses should have a gang foreman over them. In this case, the over-foreman had two-fold functions; first, of training each of the bosses under them; and second, of smoothing out any difficulties between the bosses under them and bosses in one of the other functional areas.⁵³

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 99-102.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 102-104.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 99-102.

It appears that this concept of functional foremen has generally been considered of minor importance in the literature of management as compared to Taylor's earlier work in the formation of the principles of scientific management. It must be acknowledged, however, that this type of organization was the first formal attempt to incorporate scientific management into actual organization structures. Two well known principles of management found within this type of organization are: the separation of planning and performance, and functional management.⁵⁴ It has been appreciated by several writers that the use of these two principles in Taylor's functional organization had the advantage of creating higher functional efficiency than was possible in the straight-line type of organiza-

⁵⁴Urwick acknowledges these two principles by quoting from F. W. Taylor's book, Shop Management. He said: "The first was the separation of planning from performance--" All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning department.' The second was the substitution for the older type of organization of what he called 'functional' management. 'Functional management consists in so dividing the work of management that each man from the assistant superintendent down shall have as few functions as possible to perform.' " Urwick, "Organization as a Technical Problem," p. 52.

tion.⁵⁵

The separation of planning and performance increased efficiency by removing much of the routine of management from detailed personnel control to the operation of the system, thereby minimizing the functions that each man was called upon to perform. This arrangement had the advantage of giving the foreman or supervisor more time to devote to the technical problems of his specialized area.⁵⁶

The functional aspect of this type of organization is also advantageous in the sense that it conveys specific knowledge and guidance to each workman through experts rather than foremen who are partially educated in several fields. The technical competence of the expert will give

⁵⁵Bethel, et al., Industrial Organization and Management; William Foote Whyte, Men At Work; Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization; Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management; and Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem."

⁵⁶Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 166; Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 52; Whyte, Men At Work, p. 93. Whyte pointed out that under Taylor's functional foreman system, all co-ordination of the production on the various machines is handled by the planning department. See also, Taylor, Shop Management, p. 110.

him prestige with his subordinates which, in turn, will help him gain the co-operation of the workers and in the establishment of proper working conditions which will ultimately create a more efficient organization.⁵⁷ It has been acknowledged further that a supplementary advantage under this type of organization is that it is easier to find supervisors in sufficient numbers who possess the required abilities.⁵⁸

It would seem reasonable to assume that, in general, the incorporation of the scientific principles in Taylor's functional organization did indeed increase the potential efficiency of his organization. It must be realized further, however, that this arrangement also created several problems.

The literature indicates that many of the

⁵⁷Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 166; Bethel, et al., Industrial Organization and Management, p. 138.

⁵⁸Spriegel and Lansburgh, Industrial Management, p. 71. They realized that with the increased technological complexities in industry it is extremely difficult to find supervisors with the diversified knowledge and ability to supervise a total department or division. It is easier to be skilled in a specialized area.

difficulties with this type of organization are a result of problems of co-ordination up the line.⁵⁹ Kimball and Kimball explained that co-ordination up the line breaks down under this functional type of organization. They suggested the system

...tends to become unstable because of the weakening of disciplinary or line control unless proper means of co-ordinating the work of men and departments of the same authority level are provided.⁶⁰

Urwick emphasized this point by saying: "In every undertaking the 'scalar principle' must be observed or authority breaks down."⁶¹

To understand how co-ordination breaks down under Taylor's functional approach to organization, one

⁵⁹Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 15; Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 166; Stanley Vance, Industrial Administration, p. 126; Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 52. Urwick succinctly stated this point of view when he said: "But when his concept of a division of responsibilities by function is carried higher up the line of control in any large enterprise, difficulty is encountered immediately. The 'scalar process' is weakened. Co-operation lapses, or is secured only by exceptional efforts."

⁶⁰Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 166.

⁶¹Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 57.

must consider several aspects. First of all, since the co-ordinator is usually distant from the work level, he has trouble establishing common action among his subordinates.⁶² Second, communication between levels becomes extremely difficult because the specialized subordinates state only a partial view of a given situation. It is easy to see that these partial views will lead to conflicting reports and will increase the co-ordinator's burden of knowledge.⁶³

Dalton went on to suggest that there is also much confusion at the production level. He envisioned employees receiving orders that treated the work process as though it was made up of independent rather than interlocking operations.

Again, as the officers focus on their respective spheres of work, their shared authority overlaps and leads to contradictory orders, evasion of duties, and poor discipline.⁶⁴

⁶²Dalton, *Men Who Manage*, p. 15. According to this type of organization the officers each deal with only one phase of the operations. Also, the relation of his specialty to that of others is of no official concern to him. Therefore, the co-ordinator must co-ordinate all aspects of the operations without any help.

⁶³Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 15.

F. D. Barrett noted that in this type of organization (more than one boss), unity of command and co-ordination was impossible to maintain. He pointed out that: "Co-ordination requires one man to be in charge who can judge and synchronize the timing and balance of operations."⁶⁵

Two other minor disadvantages of Taylor's functional foremen can be briefly considered. Kimball and Kimball pointed out that the separation of mental and manual work will make automations of the workers.⁶⁶ Whyte concerned himself with the idea that extreme division of

⁶⁵F. D. Barrett, "The Staff-line Dilemma," p. 46. For a discussion on the principle of unity of command vs. the principle of specialization in Taylor's sense, see William W. Hogan, "A Dangerous Tendency in Government," p. 235; Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior. Simon noted the academic controversy between these two principles when he said: "But the issue is far from clear, and experts can be ranged on both sides of the controversy. On the side of unity of command, there may be cited the dicta of Gulick and others. On the side of specialization there are Taylor's theory of functional supervision, MacMahon and Millet's ideas of 'dual supervision', and the practice of technical supervision in military organization." p. 24.

⁶⁶Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, p. 166. George Filipetti, Industrial Management In Transition, p. 68. Filipetti considered this same criticism only from the point of view that too much specialization will make automatons of the workers. Taylor, The Principles of Scientific Management, p. 125-126. Taylor presented an argument in defense of this criticism.

labour in the functional organization would divorce the worker from the product. Whyte noted that once the workers lost the ability to identify with the product, they also lost a sense of belonging which would have contributed to a higher morale.⁶⁷

Taylor's functional foremanship was abandoned after several unsuccessful 'pilot' tests.⁶⁸ With co-ordination hampered because of overlapping authority and the inability to fix responsibilities, frictions resulted, suppressing the initiative of both workers and supervisors.⁶⁹ It must be appreciated, however, that Taylor's judgement

⁶⁷Whyte, Men At Work, pp. 93-95. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Taylor's functional organization contains eight areas of specialization. Workers become more concerned about their specific job or contribution to the product rather than the total product. For more discussion on functional versus product organization, see Burleigh B. Gardner and David G. Moore, "The Techniques of Organization," Human Relations in Industry (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955).

⁶⁸Vance, Industrial Administration, p. 126; Taylor, Shop Management, p. 107; Drury, Scientific Management, p. 204.

⁶⁹Vance, Industrial Administration, p. 126.

was sound when he asserted that too much was expected from the average foreman and that industrial management had become too complex to be organized under the straight-line type of organization.⁷⁰ Further, Taylor's ideas on specialization and the separation of planning and performance were instrumental in setting the foundations for a staff-line type of organization.⁷¹

Summary

In this chapter we have followed the path of organizational structuring through two general phases: Military, Line or Scalar; and Functional. The first of these organization types, Military, Line or Scalar, was

⁷⁰Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry, p. 32.

⁷¹L. P. Alford, and J. R. Bangs, Production Handbook (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), p. 17. Alford and Bangs look at a staff-line organization and compare the different offices with those of the eight specialists under Taylor's functional foremen system. They found a definite relationship between the offices of the two types of organization.

taken from the military and introduced into modern industry when it first developed. This type of organization had a supreme co-ordinating authority that ran from top management down to the lowest echelon. When business organizations were small this straight-line organization was effective. Its lines of responsibility were clear, it was flexible and adaptable, it gave employees a feeling of participation, and it was conducive to the development of well-rounded executives. The disadvantages of this type of organization became evident about the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when industry experienced phenomenal growth in size and complexity. Top executives became overburdened with excessive administrative responsibilities; there was a loss in competitive effectiveness because the simple line organization was unable to facilitate specialization; and finally, the organizational distance between top authority and operative action rapidly increased causing a slow down in communications, paralleled with a higher level of inaccuracies and distortions in the messages.

In 1911, F. W. Taylor formally introduced

the principles of scientific management into industrial organization. From these principles he formulated a new type of organization that has been labelled Functionalism. It was a unique development, distinct from the earlier straight-line organization in the sense that it considered specialization (dividing the hierarchy up by functions rather than authority) and removed the administrative burden from the executives (separated planning from performance). The use of these two principles of scientific management, the separation of planning and performance, and functional management, had the advantage of creating a higher functional efficiency than the preceeding straight-line organization.

Nevertheless, this type of organization was unable to gain general support because of its problems with co-ordination. With the co-ordinator distant from the work level, he had trouble establishing common action among his subordinates. Further, information the co-ordinator received was biased by specialized subordinates who stated only a partial view. Generally speaking, overlapping authority and the inability to fix

responsibility resulted in frictions that suppressed the initiative of both workers and supervisors.

Taylor's idea of incorporating specialization and division of labour into the organization structure to facilitate the increased load of managerial work and the requirement for specialized personnel was instrumental in setting the foundations of a third type of organization, the Traditional Staff-Line.

CHAPTER III

THE TRADITIONAL STAFF-LINE CONCEPT

Introduction

The traditional staff-line organization assumes that all managerial activities can be divided into line activities and staff activities. With the exception of the additional staff function, this type of organization is similar to the earlier scalar type. The line people continue to maintain complete responsibility for the primary functions, while the staff group are assigned an auxiliary responsibility of assisting the line group in the performance of their primary functions.¹

¹Percival White, Business Management (New York: Henry Holt, 1926), p. 89; Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 396; Leonard D. White, An Introduction of the Study of Public Administration (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 195; Hall H. Logan, "Line and Staff: An Obsolete Concept?" Personnel, 43 (January-February, 1966), p. 26; Louis A. Allen, "Identifying Line and Staff," in Organizations: Structure and Behavior, ed. by Joseph A. Litterer (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1963), p. 94; Henri Fayol, Industrial and General Administration (London, Pitman and Sons, 1930), p. 48.

The introduction of this staff-line concept in industrial organizations has been considered a result of Taylor's ideas of incorporating specialization and division of labour into the organization structure.² However, it is appreciated that the concept of staff and line had existed in military terminology many years prior to its introduction in business organizations.³

Once the staff-line concept attained general acceptance in industry, management ran into problems of distinguishing between staff and line positions. Some writers used authority as the base of distinction by advocating that line people maintain complete authority and

²Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 57; Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 57; Alford and Bangs, Production Handbook, p. 17.

³John D. Stanley, "The General Staff," Journal of the Academy of Management, 2 (April, 1959), pp. 57-62; Janowitz, The Professional Soldier, pp. 64-65; Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Administration," in Papers on the Science of Administration, ed. by Luther Gulick and L. Urwick (New York: Institute of Public Administration, 1937), p. 30.

and staff have no authority.⁴ To complicate this problem of distinguishing between the two groups, a rapid growth in business volume caused a vertical separation of staff from line management. In fact, as staff organization grew, they began to develop informal authority in their area of specialization.⁵ With ready access to specialists, the line began to release control and co-ordinating functions to the staff which created a high level of dependence of one over the other. Thus, a new type of relationship was evolving which could

⁴Robert C. Sampson, The Staff Role in Management (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1955), p. 43. See also, Pigors and Myers, Personnel Administration: A Point of View and a Method, (5th ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 33; O. Glenn Stahl, "The Network of Authority," in Management of Human Resources, ed. by P. Pigors, C. A. Myers, and F. T. Malm (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 35.

⁵Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 373; Charles A. Myers and John G. Turnbull, "Line and Staff in Industrial Relations," in Organization: Structure and Behavior, ed. by Joseph A. Litterer (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1963), pp. 308-316; Pfiffner and Frank P. Sherwood, Administrative Organization (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960); F. D. Barrett, "The Staff-Line Dilemma."

not be defined by the earlier distinction of line having authority, staff having no authority.

Some writers felt it more appropriate to define their relationship by means of an authority continuum.⁶ The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the traditional staff-line concept and explore its evolution toward a re-defined staff-line concept based on an authority continuum.

Traditional Staff-Line Concept

The staff-line concept had its beginning in industrial organizations as a result of Taylor's ideas of incorporating specialization and division of labour into the organization structure to facilitate the increased load of managerial work and the requirement for specialized personnel.⁷ This type of organization considered that

⁶E. H. Anderson, "Line, Staff, and Functional Relationships," in Current Issues and Emerging Concepts in Management, ed. by Paul M. Dauten, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962); Bailey, "How 'Pure' Should the Staff Role Be?", pp. 3-5, 35-36; Logan, "Line and Staff: An Obsolete Concept?" pp. 28-29.

⁷Urwick, "Organization As a Technical Problem," p. 57; Dalton, Men Who Manage, p. 57; Alford and Bangs, Production Handbook, p. 17.

all managerial activities could be divided into line activities and staff activities.⁸

The line organization was regarded as more fundamental than the staff form because: "It is the functional hierarchy that leads directly to the division of primary operative labour and consequent primary specialization." ⁹ Often the line has been considered synonymous with the earlier scalar type of organization with the addition of an auxiliary staff function.¹⁰ Theore-

⁸Percival White, Business Management, p. 89.

⁹Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 396. Davis pointed out that the primary service objective is of prime concern to the management. "Continued failure to achieve adequately the organization's primary service objectives may lead to financial failure."

¹⁰Mooney, The Principles of Organization, p. 35. From a political point of view, see Leonard D. White, An Introduction to the Study of Public Administration, p. 195. Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, pp. 369-370. Davis demonstrates a similar concept between the line and earlier scalar organization when he stated: "There must be a hierarchy of responsibility, authority, and accountability which is based on the primary functional hierarchy. It is a primary chain of command for this reason." For a variety of views that consider line as a primary function, see Hall H. Logan, "Line and Staff: An Obsolete Concept?", p. 26; Louis A. Allen, "Identifying Line and Staff," p. 94; P. Pigors and C. A. Myers, Personnel Administration: A Point of View and a Method (5th ed.: New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), p. 33.

tically, the staff organization evolved from the primary line organization to relieve the line officers from their overload of managerial work as well as to supply the organization with the needed specialized background, training, experience and ability.¹¹ To accomplish this task, the staff are assigned an "auxiliary responsibility", for which they assist the line in the performance of a primary function and service or facilitate the line in such a fashion that their primary function will be easier to perform.¹²

Several authorities attested that the concept of staff and line had existed in military terminology many

¹¹Paul Holden, L. Fish, and H. Smith, Top Management Organization and Control (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1941), p. 36. They said: "Staff departments do not create new functions but concentrate specialized attention upon certain phases of the management problem as these reach extensive proportions." Henri Fayol, Industrial and General Administration, p. 48. Fayol made the observation that: "The staff is a group of men which has the strength, knowledge, and time which the general manager may lack; it is a help or reinforcement, a sort of extension of the manager's responsibility."

¹²Brown, The Organization of Industry, p. 227; Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 370.

years prior to its formal introduction into business organizations.¹³ In particular, Gulick made the statement: "The army has contributed much of the theory of organization. Not the least of these contributions has been the concept of line and staff."¹⁴ This becomes more evident when one appreciates the similarities between the staff-line concept in business and in military organizations. In both types of organization the staff function advises and facilitates as well as assists in co-ordination.¹⁵

It must be appreciated, however, that there are

¹³Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Administration," p. 30; John D. Stanley, "The General Staff," pp. 57-62; Gerald G. Fisch, "Line-Staff Is Obsolete," Harvard Business Review, 39 (September, 1961), pp. 67-68. For a description of a staff and line arrangement in the United States army, see War Department, Staff Officer's Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1940); Janowitz, The Professional Soldier, pp. 64-65. Janowitz noted the existence of staff in the United States army as early as 1860 (Civil War). When reviewing the nature of military duties at this time, he found that approximately 6.8% of the personnel were specialists as compared to 93.2% who were line.

¹⁴Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Organization," p. 30.

¹⁵Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 370.

some important differences.¹⁶ Probably, the greatest distinction is that in business there are two types of staff; those who assist in management's control function and those who assist in the performance of its own function of creative planning. This distinction between the co-ordination of thought and the co-ordination of action is less clear in the military organization.¹⁷

Many organization people felt it was important to clearly distinguish between line and staff positions. Probably the most commonly used distinction between the two found its base in authority. Numerous writers advocated that line maintains complete authority and staff

¹⁶For a definition of the military staff, see General Service Schools, U. S. A., Command, Staff and Tactics (General Service Schools Press, 1923), p. 24. "By the term staff is meant the personnel who help the commander in the exercise of the functions of Command." See also, Mooney and Reiley, Onward Industry, pp. 60, 517. They said: "The staff function in organization means the service of advice or counsel, as distinguished from the function of authority or command." p. 60. "Staff functions exist for one purpose--to facilitate organized planning and procedure." p. 517. See also, Mooney, The Principles of Organization, p. 36.

¹⁷Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 371.

act in an advisory capacity with no authority.¹⁸ Sampson discusses the activities of the line and staff people under the condition of complete authority and no authority respectively. He pointed out that line manager's organization and administration involves four essential tasks:

- (a) planning--analyzing what to do,
- (b) deciding--determining what to do,
- (c) doing--taking action, and
- (d) controlling--checking results.¹⁹

He went on to note that staff

...is concerned with improvement: aiding management to improve its organizing and administering via reducing expenditure, better utilizing facilities, simplifying methods or making machines more productive, and securing greater results from people.²⁰

¹⁸Robert C. Sampson, The Staff Role in Management, p. 43; Pigors and Myers, Personnel Administration, p. 33; O. Glenn Stahl, "The Network of Authority," p. 35; Kimball and Kimball, Principles of Industrial Organization, pp. 163-165; Mooney, The Principles of Organization, p. 35. It should be acknowledged at this point that organization theory reverted from Taylor's concept of division by function to the old scalar idea of division by authority.

¹⁹Sampson, The Staff Role in Management, p. 43.

²⁰Ibid., p. 43-44. For a similar breakdown of staff and line, see Stahl, "The Network of Authority," p. 35. Stahl stated that the conventional criteria of the line function or operations appear to be: (a) supervisory command--giving orders and instructions; (b) decision-making on cases; (c) producing a product or a service; (d) dealing with clientele groups in connection with any of the first three. The conventional criteria of the staff function appears to be: (a) planning; (b) research; (c) advice; and (d) the absence of command.

Pigors and Myers added to these distinctions between staff and line by noting that the line managers have complete responsibility and accountability for the results achieved by the people in their plant, department, or section. They went on to say: "Staff specialists, on the other hand, are those who provide specialized services to line managers and advise and counsel them in the performance of their responsibilities."²¹

Re-definition of Staff-Line Concept

In more recent years, rapid growth in the business volume of organizations has been accompanied by a vertical separation of staff from line management.²² This separation of line and staff has the effect of making

²¹Pigors and Myers, Personnel Administration, p. 33.

²²Davis, The Fundamentals of Top Management, p. 373. Davis explained that: "Each of management's basic functions of planning, organizing, and controlling also increases with the volume and complexity of the work that must be done. It becomes necessary, accordingly, to differentiate various phases of the work of management from one another to provide for managerial specialization."

staff management less dependent on the line. Several writers have appreciated this fact by observing that in actual practice staff do have authority within their own functional areas.²³ In general, there is an observable change or transition from the traditional staff-line concept, where staff had no authority, to what some authors refer to as the 'functional theory', where staff have authority in their area of specialization.²⁴

Douglas McGregor explained that the line has become increasingly dependent on the knowledge and skill of specialized groups. Also, with the addition of control

²³J. K. Bailey, "How 'Pure' Should the Staff Role Be?", pp. 3-5; Charles A. Myers and John G. Turnbull, "Line and Staff in Industrial Relations," pp. 308-316; John M. Pfiffner and Frank P. Sherwood, Administrative Organization.

²⁴F. D. Barrett, "The Staff-Line Dilemma," pp. 45-47. Barrett noted that today there exists two different theories about how to fit the specialist in with the line personnel. One of these theories, "Advisory theory", is the traditional approach where the specialist advises, assists, and gives service; he does not decide, instruct, order or control. The other theory he calls the "Functional theory", which differs in the sense that staff have authority in their specialized areas. He notes that "Between the extremes of the two theories, there are various intermediate stages at which the complementary balance can be struck." p. 46.

and co-ordinating functions by management, the position of the staff people is elevated toward a dominant, influential role within the organization.²⁵ Pfiffner and Sherwood state that the close working relationship between staff and the top management makes the development of staff authority almost inevitable.²⁶

The literature indicates numerous attempts to conceptualize a model of line and staff relationships that would incorporate the traditional line-staff model as well as the re-defined model. The majority of the writers seem to favour an authority continuum approach.²⁷ For example, E. H. Anderson considered the essential

²⁵Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), p. 155.

²⁶Pfiffner and Sherwood, Administrative Organization, p. 173.

²⁷E. H. Anderson, "Line, Staff, and Functional Relationships,"; Robert Saltonstall, "Who's Who In Personnel Administration," in Management of Human Resources, ed. by P. Pigors, C. A. Myers, and F. T. Malm (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 25-34; Bailey, "How 'Pure' Should the Staff Role Be?", pp. 3-5.

differentiating features of line, staff and functional relationships are in the degree and scope of authority that has been granted to an individual.²⁸ Logan differentiated these three relationships as pure types that mark a continuum of varying degrees and types of authority.

He noted that: (1) the line relationship has administrative authority. It has the right and power to issue commands, to exact accountability, and to discipline for violations; (2) the functional relationship has authority in their specialized areas, to issue orders or instruction to one, several, or all other departments in an enterprise with the right of accountability from the addressee. "Functional authority is as binding as line authority, but it does not carry the right to discipline for violation (or even to threaten) in order to enforce compliance," and (3) the staff relationship which has no authority to issue orders to other departments and no right to demand

²⁸Anderson, "Line, Staff and Functional Relationships," p. 226.

accountability.²⁹ Anderson considered the same type of authority continuum as Logan. He stated that: "The functional relationship, for example, is one standing somewhere between the full authority of the line type and the advisory authority of the staff type."³⁰

Some writers view the staff-line relationship by the type of authority staff people exhibit when interacting with line management.³¹ Bailey found, in a mail questionnaire sent to thirty-four companies, that the staff did exist with varying degrees of authority. "The staff roles identified were: 'traditional advice and service', 'definite attempts to exert influence', 'compulsory consultation', 'concurring authority', and 'true functional authority', each representing an

²⁹Logan, "Line and Staff: An Obsolete Concept?", p. 28-29.

³⁰Anderson, "Line, Staff, and Functional Relationships," pp. 226-227.

³¹Bailey, "How 'Pure' Should the Staff Role Be?", pp. 3-5; Myers and Turnbull, "Line and Staff in Industrial Relations," pp. 308-316; William H. Newman and Charles E. Sumner, The Process of Management: Concepts, Behavior and Practice (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960); Saltonstall, "Who's Who In Personnel Administration," pp. 25-34.

CHAPTER IV

STAFF-LINE CONFLICT: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an increasing amount of critical literature from public and business administration on the problems that result when the staff-line concept is applied to contemporary organizations. Much of this critical literature is in disagreement with the staff-line concept. The themes of criticism are strikingly similar. For instance, the literature is critical of the fact that this concept of organization is bogged in the mud of traditional simplism; it is critical of the staff-line's inability to recognize the organization as a power system and therefore is not productive of effective management; it is critical of the staff-line concept emphasis on 'how things should be done' rather than 'how things are done'; and finally, it is critical of the fact that this concept relegates staff personnel to an inferior position in a dynamic organization where relative contri-

butions of staff and line vary over time.¹

In general, an overriding criticism of this traditional concept is its inability to describe the real organizational behavior of line, the real organizational behavior of staff, and their relationship to each other under conditions of actual organizational functioning.

In fact, support of this criticism was made evident in Chapter III where it was observed that numerous writers were actually attempting to re-define the

¹For a representative sample of these criticisms from the field of public administration, see O. Glenn Stahl, "The Network of Authority," O. Glenn Stahl, "More on the Network of Authority," Public Administration Review, 20 (Winter, 1960), pp. 35-37; Frank M. Stewart, "Purchasing of Highway Equipment in Texas," American Political Science Review, 29 (May, 1930), pp. 409-415; Willard Hogan, "A Dangerous Tendency in Government," pp. 362-367; Herbert A. Simon, Donald V. Smithburg, and Victor Thompson, Public Administration (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), pp. 280-291. From the field of business administration, see Douglas McGregor, "The Staff Function in Human Relations," Journal of Social Issues, 4 (Summer, 1948), pp. 6-23; Peter F. Drucker, The Practice of Management (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1954), p. 241; Edward C. Schleh, Successful Executive Action (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1955); Charles A. Myers and John G. Turnbull, "Line and Staff in Industrial Relations," Harvard Business Review, 34 (July-August, 1956), pp. 113-124; J. Rich Johnson, "Line-Staff Revisited," Advanced Management, 23 (May, 1958), p. 17; Gerald G. Fisch, "Line-Staff Is Obsolete," pp. 67-69.

traditional staff-line relationship.²

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to develop a theoretical base from which an objective evaluation can be made of the feasibility of the staff-line concept in contemporary organizations. To accomplish such a goal, the following issues will be examined:

1. The behavioral components of the staff-line system will be identified through the concept of work orientation.³ Thus, the concept of work orientation as put forth by such writers as Peter Blau, Roy A. Francis, and Robert C. Stone will form the foundation of this analysis.⁴ In particular, these authors have identified that an organization is composed of

²Chapter III, pp. 49-54. Of general interest, it has been noted that several attempts at re-defining the staff-line concept reflects some of Taylor's earlier thoughts on his concept of functional foremen.

³The meaning of work orientation and research contributions will be examined.

⁴Peter Blau, "Orientation Towards Clients in a Public Welfare Agency," Administrative Science Quarterly, 5 (December, 1960), pp. 341-361; Roy A. Francis and Robert C. Stone, Service and Procedure in Bureaucracy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1958); Emile S. Shihadeh, "The Jordanian Civil Service: A Study of Traditional Bureaucracy," (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1965).

essentially two basic types of personnel; those who exhibit a service orientation and those who emphasize a procedural orientation. Also, the literature tends to relate a service orientation to that of a professional specialist and a procedural orientation to that of a line bureaucrat.⁵

2. Broad relationships in the system requirements of staff organization versus the line organization will be identified. By virtue of the different work orientations of the specialist and the line managers, writers such as Melville Dalton, Chris Argyris, and Robert Golembiewski have observed a fundamental opposing attitude on how these two groups relate to the organization.⁶ Essentially, these writers

⁵For example, see Logan Wilson, The Academic Man (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), Ch. 5; Burleigh B. Gardiner and David G. Moore, Human Relations In Industry, Ch. 6; Harvey Smith, "The Sociological Study of Hospitals," (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1949).

⁶Melville Dalton, Men Who Manage, pp. 99-100; Chris Argyris, The Impact of Budgets on People (New York: Controllershship Foundation Inc., 1952), p. 14; Robert T. Golembiewski, Organizing Men and Power: Patterns of Behavior and Line-Staff Models (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1967), pp. 69-70.

